

Private Hire Vehicle Plate Exemption

1. Objectives

- 1.1 The aim of the policy is to ensure public safety whilst taking a balanced approach to licensing requirements. Its objective is the provision of an exemption to allow “executive vehicles” to operate without displaying external identification plates (private hire vehicle licence plate).

2. Introduction

- 2.1 The displaying of the external identification plate on a licensed vehicle and a drivers badge is important in terms of public safety and reassurance. They indicate to the travelling public that prior to being licensed both the vehicle and the driver have been subjected to checks to assist with public safety issues.
- 2.2 However there are occasions when the requirement to display an external identification plate may have the opposite effect in the terms of customer safety and could have commercial implications for the operating business. The display of local authority licence plates may also deter some corporate customers from using the service; and in some cases the identification of the vehicle as licensed may allow “high risk” passengers to more readily be targeted putting both them and the driver at risk.
- 2.3 The Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 requires that private hire vehicles display an identification plate (licence plate) and drivers of those vehicles wear a driver’s badge. The same legislation also allows South Cambridgeshire District Council to exempt vehicles from the need to display an identification plate and, where that exemption applies, the requirement to wear a Private Hire driver’s badge.
- 2.4 It is not intended that a significant number of Private Hire vehicles licensed by South Cambridgeshire District Council should be exempt from the council's requirement to display an external vehicle identification plate, however the council recognises that there may be circumstances when it would be appropriate for vehicles operating the type of service to be considered suitable for such an exemption.
- 2.5 In creating it’s policy South Cambridgeshire District Council does not seek to provide a definitive list of vehicles it considers to be suitable (subject to use) for exemption from the requirement to display external vehicle identification plates.
- 2.6 This section provides guidance to potential applicants on the standards of vehicle, comfort and equipment that the council considers should be the minimum standard of comfort and vehicle type before the Authority would consider such an application.

3. Policy

- 3.1 Exemptions from displaying external identification plates (vehicle licence plates) may be in respect of individual vehicles only. Applications for exemptions relating to a fleet of vehicles will not be allowed.
- 3.2 Each application will be assessed by an authorised council officer to ensure that it is fit for purpose.
- 3.3 Applications for the exemption from the requirement to display an external identification plate on the rear of a private hire vehicle may be considered where the following requirements are met:
 - a) Vehicle models must be either four door saloons, or five door estates or five door hatchbacks, or luxury style people carrier type vehicles;
 - b) Vehicles must be of a standard of comfort and equipped to a level equal to or above luxury brands of vehicles such as “S” and “E” Class Mercedes- Benz, 7 Series BMW, Lexus “GS” or “LS” models, Audi A8 Series, Jaguar, Rolls Royce and Bentley saloons. (The highest specification executive type cars from other manufacturers may also be considered);
 - c) The vehicle will be in pristine condition with no visible defects, dents or blemishes to the external bodywork or internal trim and seating;
 - d) The type of work is “executive” in nature. This means that the vehicle is used primarily to provide transport under a written contract to a company or person, or by the type of clients who for security or personal safety reasons would not want the vehicle to be identifiable.
- 3.4 Applications may only be made if supported in writing by a recognised South Cambridgeshire District Council Chauffeur company, or if a sole operator with a bona fide outline business plan showing written interest from prospective companies who may wish to use a chauffeur service. Along with clear evidence of how they will comply with this policy and conditions of licensing.
- 3.5 Where an operator wishes to make an application for a vehicle to be exempt from displaying an external identification plate they will be required to do so in writing. The application must be accompanied by supporting documentation.

- 3.6 The council may require applicants to provide additional documentation as reasonably necessary to allow the council to make an informed decision. Where such documentation is not provided to the satisfaction of the council the application for exemption will be refused.
- 3.7 Where an application is granted, an exemption certificate and internal plate will be issued as soon as practical after the decision is made.
- 3.8 Where a vehicle is exempted from the requirement to display an external identification plate the licensed driver of the vehicle will also be exempted from wearing a driver's badge.
- 3.9 The authority to determine any application for an exemption notice is by delegation to the Licensing Officer.
- 3.10 Applicants have the right to appeal a decision where a grant of a notice is refused or revoked; appeals must be in writing and will be reviewed by the licensing sub-committee appeals panel.
- 3.11 All vehicles granted an exemption notice must in addition to this policy also comply in accordance with the requirements of the council's standard private hire conditions.
- 3.12 Where there is any inconsistency between the standard private hire conditions and these conditions, then these conditions shall prevail.

Private Hire Vehicle Plate Exemption Conditions

The conditions listed below apply to all Private Hire vehicles granted an exemption from South Cambridgeshire District Council from the requirement to display an external identification plate (private hire vehicle licence plate). The following conditions in addition to the standard conditions required for private hire vehicles.

- a) The vehicle licence plate and exemption notice issued by the council in accordance to the requirements of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 shall remain the property of the council.
- b) The vehicle will be issued with a licence plate, which must be kept within the vehicle at all times, along with a small identification disc to be displayed on the front nearside windscreen.
- c) Any vehicle granted an exemption from displaying a vehicle licence plate will be required to have the internal licence and the exemption certificate kept within the vehicle.
- d) In the event of loss or damage rendering the internal plate or exemption certificate unserviceable the operator shall make immediate application for a replacement for which a fee is payable.
- e) The internal plate and exemption notice issued by the council must be carried in the vehicle at all times and must be produced upon request to an authorised officer of the council or any police officer on request.
- f) When issued an exemption notice, the vehicle will not be required to display door signs which the council require private hire vehicles to display.
- g) When issued an exemption notice a taximeter must not be installed in the vehicle.
- h) The operator will not display in or on the vehicle any advertisement, signage, logos or insignia advertising the operating company or the vehicle's status as a private hire vehicle.
- i) The operator will not display in or on the vehicle any advertisement, signage, logos or insignia advertising third party companies, products or services.
- j) Hiring details must be made available to the passenger/hirer see vehicle licence conditions S.6.1
- k) During the period of the exemption certificate the driver will not be required to wear a private hire drivers badge but must have it available for immediate inspection by an authorised officer of the council or any police officer on request.
- l) During the period of exemption notice the driver of the vehicle whilst engaged on private hire work will be smartly dressed in either a formal chauffeur's uniform or business suit with collar and tie.
- m) The operator will notify the council immediately of any change of use of the vehicle.
- n) The driver and passenger front side window glass and front windscreen must be clear. However tinted windows can be fitted to the rear side and rear window glass of the vehicle as long as they are factory fitted, comply with current legislation and comply with any current private hire vehicle conditions.
- o) The exemption will cease to have an effect on the sale or transfer of the vehicle to another party. The person to whom the exemption is granted must inform the council of the sale or transfer of ownership immediately and in writing. The exemption notice must be returned to the council along with the internal Private Hire vehicle licence plate.